

Executive Summary

Kutztown University is committed to increasing civic learning and democratic engagement. The strategic plan has four goals, the second of which is “Community Engagement”. The third objective, “Increase the participation of members of the University community in the wider community” speaks directly to the importance of demonstrating good citizenship and social responsibility. Being an educated voter is critical to the success of that goal!

The Mission, Vision & Purpose statements of the University reflect this commitment, as well. The statements are as follows:

- **Our Mission:** Kutztown University's mission is to provide a high-quality education at the undergraduate and graduate levels in order to prepare students to meet **lifelong intellectual, ethical, social, and career challenges**.
- **Our Vision:** Kutztown University aspires to be a regional center of excellence providing opportunities for advanced academic, cultural, **and public service experiences**, within a caring community, designed to promote success in a global society.
- **Our Purpose:** Grounded in regional history and focused on innovative futures through the colleges of Business, Education, Liberal Arts & Sciences and Visual & Performing Arts; Kutztown University: offers a contemporary liberal arts education as the foundation for inspiring and **challenging students to grow intellectually, professionally, ethically, civically, and socially**; provides support for students to reach their unique potential; **commits to access and diversity**, drawing upon international, national, regional, and community partnerships to **prepare new generations of global citizens**; values the life experiences of all community members.

At the time of the development of this plan, there is plenty of good work to be done about increasing the level of campus involvement in the conversation about educating voters and urging students to get to the polls. As we continue to educate all constituents, provide resources for reference and become more engaged in local, state and national initiatives, our campus involvement will surely increase. The NSLVE reports from 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020, 2022 are solid indicators that the work being done is impacting engagement in a positive manner. We will continue to monitor the statistical information provided in the reports to ensure we are trending in a positive direction. We will continue to evaluate our partnerships with TurboVote, the Andrew Goodman Foundation, Campus Vote Project and Voter Friendly Campus programs.

Leadership

The voter education and voter registration efforts come through the leadership within the Kutztown University division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs. The office of Student Involvement and the Community Outreach Center are the central catalysts for the work being done. There are critical campus partnerships with the following offices:

- Information Technology- Troy Vingom: Chief Information Officer
- Government Relations Liaison- Sandy Green: University Liaison
- University Library- Martha Anderson: Director of Library Services
- Web Development- Josh Leiboff: University Webmaster
- Student Government Board- Jerry Schearer: Chief Diversity Officer
- Career Development Office- Kerri Gardi: Director of Career Development Center
- Student Organizations- Leah Cassellia: Senior Director MSU/OSI

Each year there are two students selected to be KU Votes ambassadors who assist with voter education programming efforts and aid in the increased voter registration rates. These students are a critical part of the succession plan. For 2024 the KU votes Ambassadors are: Elizabeth Kolb and Abigayle Regensberger. For the purpose of continuity there is a professional staff member that oversees the KU Votes program, Amanda Garcia. She serves as the Associate Director of the Community Outreach Center.

In addition to the campus leadership, we have partnerships with several organizations.

[Campus Election Engagement Project](#) (CEEP) This organization will provide resources that will help further develop our election engagement practices. Our contact is Johanna Mudry. 610.517.1700 johanna@campuselect.org

Andrew Goodman Foundation (AGF) This is our partner organization for the VE Ambassador program. It provides, funding for programming (\$1000 annually), training and guidance. There is an annual training called the NCLTS mid-June in the NY/NY area. Our contact is Mia Matthews, mia.matthews@andrewgoodman.org. We are required to submit campus plans (January), activity reports (within 2 weeks of each event), activities budget reports (June) and ambassadors surveys (each semester). Our ambassadors at Kutztown University are called Kutztown Votes Ambassadors.

TurboVote/Democracy Works This nonpartisan, not for profit organization provides our unique portal for students to get voter registration support. (<https://kutztown.turbovote.org/>) This includes prompting through the registration process, providing campus addresses that are consistent with voter registration addresses that are accepted as accurate by the Berks County Election Office, referral codes. It includes an admin console that I can use. <https://admin.turbovote.org/> Our contact is Kendra Green Kendra@democracy.works (no, that is not a type-o) We are required to pay an annual fee for this service.

Fair Elections Network: Sponsors the Campus Vote Project which provides an annual certification for “Voter Friendly Campuses”. This is also sponsored by NASPA. Our Contact is Kassie Phebillo and her email is kphebillo@campusvoteproject.org

National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) of the institute for Democracy & Higher Education at Tufts University provides a report that is a tool we use for assessing and improving student civic learning and participation in democracy. We have reports from 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2022. <https://idhe.tufts.edu/about> is a website that offers many resources about the interpretation and dissemination of this information to benefit the campus community. The 2016 report is the first report that included race/ethnicity and field of study details from the Clearinghouse. The reason this is the first year it shows up in the NSLVE Report is that the registrar’s office had not provided this information to the National Clearinghouse in their reports in the past.

We are signed up annually to participate in the National Voter Registration Day efforts supported by ActionNetwork.org. They provide posters and stickers and support resources. This is the contact email: info@nationalvoterregistrationday.org and website: <https://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/partner-tools/>.

We have also developed partnerships with the Office of County Elections Services for Berks County, as well as Running Start.

Commitment

Since 2012, Kutztown University has invested in educating students about their voting rights and responsibilities. Each year the University has taken a variety of steps to provide support to students as they become registered, educated and engaged voters.

1. Students receive reminders via email for important deadlines such as registration deadlines, mail in ballot deadlines and requesting change of address.
2. There is a website updated with information for all students, staff and faculty to reference for current information.
3. The faculty for First Year Seminar is contacted prior to each semester, offering that the KU Votes Ambassadors are available to present to their class.
4. Each fall there is a formal celebration of NVRD and Constitution Day that includes programming around voter registration and voter education.
5. Each fall, the voter registration process is reinforced through an incentive related to the students who are running for Spirit Court Champion and the group that they represent.

Landscape

Kutztown University remains committed to civic learning and democratic engagement through its vision and mission. The Kutztown University vision states that “Kutztown University aspires to be a regional center of excellence providing opportunities for advanced academic, cultural, and public service experiences within a caring community, designed to promote success in a global society.

There are several strategic goals of Kutztown University including one specifically dedicated to community and civic engagement as seen here (<https://www.kutztown.edu/about-ku/administration/strategic-plan/goal-3.html>) The goal specifically states that “Kutztown University will partner with the community to serve the needs of the people of the commonwealth, the region, and the global community.

We have been able to measure the impact of civic learning and democratic engagement through data gathered by our NSLVE reports which we share out to the campus community. This data allows us to have insight into how our students vote and in what elections they are voting. We can also utilize the data to see where we are doing well with students based on gender, race, ethnicity, year, or major. By analyzing this data we are able to target specific populations of the student body that may be in need of additional resources in relation to civic engagement.

In relation to curriculum first-year students are required to take a first-year seminar course in which often are invited to present to courses on the subject of civic engagement. We discuss with students upcoming voting dates and deadlines to register, how to register for TurboVote and even service opportunities available for them to learn more and become engaged in the democratic process.

The Office of Student Involvement and the Community Outreach Center work to provide the co-curriculum activities, initiatives, and programs for our students outside of the classroom. Through our Kutztown Votes program, students have the opportunity to attend several civic engagement and democracy focused events throughout the semester including events like election trivia with guest speakers, events on specific democratic topics, bingo events centered on voter education, National Voter Registration Day, and others. We also host a number of community service and service-learning opportunities throughout the year with a democracy and civic learning focus. Some programs include alternative spring break that organizes at least one trip focused on advocacy and democratic engagement. See here the trip organized during the spring 2022 alternative spring break experience (<https://www.kutztown.edu/news-and-media/news-releases/march-2022/students-attend-alternative-spring-break-trip-in-washington-dc.html>)

There are a number of student clubs and organizations that are engaged in the work we do and maintain consistent partnerships in the area of civic learning and democratic engagement including:

- Allies of Kutztown University
- Alpha Phi Omega
- America Reads & Counts
- Black Student Union
- Board of Governors Scholars Community
- Environmental Action Club
- Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance
- Global Brigades at Kutztown
- Honors Club
- It's On Us Kutztown Chapter

- Kutztown University Activities Board
- NAMI at KU
- Social Workers and Advocates of Kutztown
- Student Government Board
- Student Volunteer Coalition

There have been several advantages the university has faced in the several years that has changed the landscape of student voting. Kutztown University was fortunate to have a polling location returned to campus. This gives resident students easier access to the polls on election day, particularly students who may not have had transportation to get to the polling location in the past when it was off campus. Additionally, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court recently upheld mail ballot voting in the Commonwealth which continues to protect our students' ability to vote via mail and early. Mail voting in particular has allowed us to specifically address issues of students not being able to vote at home when they are on-campus during the election.

Goals

Long-Term Goals

Listed below are the long-term goals developed by the institution. These goals are based upon data collected from the NSLVE Campus Report from September 2022 and based on other data collected by the Office of Student Involvement.

- Increase overall student voting rates of registered students by 20 percentage points from 2020 to 2028 with students of color voting at the same rates as white students and male identified students voting at the same rates as female identified students.
- By 2028, increase student turnout in mid-term elections by 20 percentage points.
- By Fall 2026, providing presentations on civic engagement and voter education to 100% of first-year seminar courses offered in the fall and spring semesters as a standard practice in the curriculum.
- By Fall 2026, establish voter registration drives for all students in residence halls on campus during their All-Hall meetings at the beginning of each fall semester.
- Support the Kutztown University Government Relations Liaison to maintain the polling place on campus in the Student Recreation Center that was re-established for the 2020 primary election.
- By Spring 2023, establish a leadership coalition with relevant stakeholders that includes diverse and marginalized communities for civic engagement and voter education related issues.
- By 2026, increase our online and social media engagement by 60%.

Civic Learning Outcomes

Civic Learning Outcomes is defined as the knowledge, skills, and values individuals need to be effective Active Citizens. An effective Active Citizen is a person who understand the obligation and undertakes the responsibility to improve community conditions, build

healthier communities and address social problems. They understand and believe in democratic participation and the need to incorporate the contributions of all members of the community. Active Citizenship can take place inside and outside the classroom through political participation.

The following learning outcomes are those which our program seeks to achieve for students at Kutztown University:

- Ability to engage respectfully with others in a diverse society and apply the knowledge from their own study and experiences to active and ethical participation in civic life.
- Understands the importance of voting, the history of voting rights, and the importance of advocacy with government at all levels including local, state, and federal.
- Develop and expand their understanding of an capacity for active participation in a community.
- Understands the social, economic, cultural, historical, and political context of one's democracy.
- Understands the impacts of government and the political system on public policy formulation and decision-making.
- Plans and/or implements action strategies that sustainably address a societal issue.
- Knowledgeable of voter information, deadlines, laws, processes, and dates and where to obtain or find aforementioned information.
- Knowledgeable of local (council members, mayor), state (state rep, senators, governor), and federal (US House Rep, US Senators) elected officials who represent them in government where they are registered to vote.
- Ability to effectively engage with elected officials and those tasked with influencing or carrying out public policy.

Short-Term Goals

Listed below are the short-term goals developed by the institution. These goals are based upon data collected from the NSLVE Campus Report from September 2022 and successful initiatives implemented at the campus level. In order to continue to reach these short-term goals the university will continue to need partnerships with a wide variety of campus stakeholders including but not limited to athletics, housing, service organizations, diversity and inclusion offices, Greek life, among others.

- Register an additional 600 students, faculty, and staff for TurboVote services between August 1st – October 1 2024.
- Continue to update voter registration information, deadlines, and dates on the Kutztown University website.
- Continue to provide at least two programs per semester that focus on aspects of civic engagement, elections, and voting.
- Host weekly voter registration tables and have voter information available at all events organized by the Kutztown University Community Outreach Center, Office of Student Involvement, Kutztown University Activities Board, and Student Volunteer Coalition.

- Implement at least 3 civic engagement and voter education service opportunities by recruiting student poll workers for elections each year, conducting civic engagement education in the America Reads & Counts program, and hosting at least two legislative advocacy days.
- Fulfill obligations and commitments to the Campus Votes Project and Andrew Goodman Foundation.
- Continue to share student voting rates by areas of study with college deans and academic department chairpersons.
- Continue to host a National Voter Registration Day each fall semester. 9/17/2024
- Attend a minimum of 5 first year seminar classes (in coordination with professors or respective departments) with short (5-7) minute presentations (scripted by the Kutztown Votes team).
- Require each Homecoming Spirit Court representative and student organization to host at least a voter registration presentation and participate in National Voter Registration Day as a requirement.
- Renew campus coalition that includes representation from marginalized communities relating to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Strategy

Kutztown University will continue to use various promising practices, while adjusting to enhance the effectiveness as we assess regularly each semester.

Voter Registration

- We partner with TurboVote/Democracy Works and have worked toward institutionalizing the voter registration process. A TurboVote prompt is presented upon logging into ENGAGE
 - *Description of Actualization: Our Campus Labs student engagement platform, “Engage” provides a prompt upon logging into ENGAGE*
- The Office of Student Involvement and the Community Outreach Center continue to host a voter drive and voter education event on National Voter Registration Day.
 - *Description of Actualization: Kutztown Votes and the Office of Student Involvement will host a National Voter Registration Day on Tuesday, September 17, 2024 in which attendees get registered to vote. Student organizations who have a representative on the Homecoming Spirit Court are required to host a table with voter education information. This information included info on candidates running for election, issues important to those organizations, etc.*
- Any student wishing to participate in our elections for Homecoming Spirit Court Champion must be signed up for TurboVote services.
 - *Description of Actualization: During the Homecoming Spirit Court election season, all Spirit Court nominees and students who wish to vote for their Champion can only do so if they were signed up or have utilized TurboVote services.*

- Kutztown Votes Ambassadors will host weekly voter registration drive tables held during both fall and spring semesters.
 - *Description of Intent to Implement: Tables have been reserved for Kutztown Votes Ambassadors to do voter registration on a weekly basis throughout the semester. Ambassadors will also provide students with voter registration deadlines, important election dates, information about candidates running for office, and promote TurboVote services.*

Voter Education & Civic Engagement

- Our campus website has valuable information, including voter resources, KU Faculty and Staff Resources, Election Resources, and Voter FAQs.
 - *Description of Actualization: The website has been updated and information shared to the campus community regarding current year election dates, laws, processes, and NSLVE data.*
- In addition to our four-part, campus-wide poster campaign, we provide resources on our webpage with suggestions on how Faculty and Staff can encourage students and colleagues at KU to get registered to vote.
 - *Description of Actualization: The information was provided to faculty. We did present information to multiple first year seminar courses, Greek Life, and organizations participating in the Homecoming Spirit Court election process and spoke about voter education and registration. Through this experience it reaffirmed for us the importance of smaller group conversations and registration assistance.*
- Service-learning and community service opportunities at Kutztown University have a civic engagement and voter education component added to them throughout the year.
 - *Description of Actualization: In 2022 6 students attended an Alternative Spring Break experience in Washington, D.C that was centered on voting rights in America. Students were required to learn about lobbying, how Congress functions, meet with a legislator, meeting non-partisan organizations doing democracy and good government work, and learn about the struggle for voting rights for marginalized populations. This program specifically tackled many of the aforementioned civic learning outcomes listed in the goals section of this report. The KU Votes ambassadors will plan civic engagement/voter education experiences through programs and trips.*
- Students apply voter and civic engagement skills learned to real life advocacy in their community on issues important to them.
 - *Description of Actualization: In 2022, 3 students including a professional staff member worked with a non-profit organization to participate in a legislative advocacy day centered on student food insecurity at college campuses. Students took skills they learned from various trainings and implemented them into citizen lobbying action to benefit their campus community. Students secured the support of legislators they met with including the Pennsylvania Chair of the Education Committee for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. This type of opportunity for advocacy will be part of future commitments.*

- Hosting at least one event per semester dedicated towards voter education and civic engagement related topics
 - *Description of Actualization: Kutztown University hosted the #ElectHer in collaboration with various campus partners that provided students with the opportunity to learn how to run for office and understanding of the importance of government work. Kutztown University also hosted a Know Your Voting Rights event that informed students about the importance of voting, important election dates, re-districting in Pennsylvania, mail-ballot information, and more.*

Ballot Access

TurboVote provides prompts regarding absentee and mail ballots as well as reminders about upcoming deadlines and important election dates. Polling place remained on campus since the 2020 primary, providing easier access for students who are registered on campus to vote in elections. Previously the polling place was located off campus that created significant barriers to students registered on campus ability to vote in elections. This barrier has since been removed, though the Kutztown Votes program continues to work with the Kutztown University Government Liaison to ensure that the polling location remains in place. The expansion of mail ballots has allowed for students to also vote with more options and at ease. Students can now vote without ever having to physically visit their polling location.

Resources Available to Us

We have access to a wide range of resources that support the Kutztown Votes initiative work. This includes our TurboVote data and statistics, funding from the Andrew Goodman Foundation for resources, various Democracy Works resources and NSLVE data. All of these materials are utilized to inform and enhance the work that we do.

NSLVE

In review of the NSVLE reports we have made some key observations that will inform the work that we will do to provide voter education. This will provide a focus and talking points moving forward. A few observations are listed below.

- A. Male KU students have voted at a rate of 7-8% less than female students
- B. First year students vote at a rate of 6-7% lower than upperclassman students.
- C. Minority students have an up to 20% turnout rate for voting. We plan to discuss strategies for voter turnout with our Athletics DEI Coordinator, Bilal Salaam and our Director of the Multi-Cultural Services, Melinda Quinones.
- D. Consistent trend for KU students by major:
 - a. Highest major turnout:
 - i. Library Science
 - ii. History
 - iii. Visual & performing Arts
 - iv. English Language & Literature
 - v. Math & Statistics

- b. Lowest major turnout:
 - i. Computer Information Sciences
 - ii. Biological & BioMed Sciences
 - iii. Parks, Recreation, Leisure & Fitness
 - iv. Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice
 - v. Business

Reporting

The Office of Student Involvement and the Community Outreach Center remain committed to sharing our NSLVE data with the campus community. Data is shared with the campus through our Kutztown Votes program website and the most recent report from 2022 is posted there for campus viewing (<https://www.kutztown.edu/about-ku/administrative-offices/student-involvement/civic-responsibility-and-community-engagement/vote.html>). Information is also shared with members of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, the president's cabinet, and the Council of Trustees. Data specific to students via major or year is shared with the various Deans of the academic colleges.

Evaluation

We gather data through our use of the NSLVE report and our TurboVote statistical information.

Through the NSLVE data observations it was determined those majors with the lowest voter turnout rates- our goal is to meet with the department heads to discuss the data and develop a plan moving forward to increase these numbers.

We plan to learn what groups and demographics of students are engaging in voter registration and voter education activity. We will then have better data to utilize while we reach out to our faculty and staff requesting their engagement in the educational process. We also collect and report data to The Andrew Goodman Foundation concerning events, initiatives, voter registration, and more.

Our Kutztown Votes Ambassadors and professional staff will be meeting on a biweekly basis throughout the academic year to assess the most recent NSLVE data and create strategies for targeted voter registration and education.